

Satan's Secret Weapons In The Church
The Christian Atheist Series: When You “Believe” in God, But Don't Believe In Prayer

Luke 22:45-46 And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, 46 And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.

INTRO: In the hour of His impending betrayal, the disciples – the Inner Circle of Peter, James and John (Matt. 26:37-38) – are fast asleep as Jesus pours His heart out to God the Father. He prays so much and so hard that blood begins to drip from His forehead – mingled with sweat (Luke 22:44). He comes to check on them, for He had asked them “to watch and pray” (Matt. 26:41) but alas!! The Saviour finds them asleep.

The Great Preacher Ian Paisley said: The Church of Jesus Christ is largely sleeping like a great bedroom. And you've all the Christians in bed and they're all sleeping and they're saying, "Please don't wake me up! I want to sleep on" Isaiah 52:1a says: “Awake, awake; put on thy strength,” Similarly Ephesians 5:14 declares: “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

Today our land is littered with Churches full of dead, sleeping Christians. They are dead to the things of God and alive to the pleasures and sins of the world! They are sleeping on God's Time inso much that He cannot bring Revival to His people. Why? Because of some secret weapons Satan has in the CHURCH. There are three: Prayerlessness, Lack of Fasting and Bitterness. The latter two are intertwined around the first. I could go on to name another: Lack of Study and Application of the Bible but today I want to look at this phenomenon of when Church folks SAY “I believe in GOD” yet DON'T Believe in Prayer.

ILLUSTRATION (TRUE STORY SUPPOSEDLY)

Once a Pastor of a Baptist Church in Mount Vernon, Texas (96 miles east of Dallas) saw a Bar open near the Church he pastored. Soon Drummond's Bar began expanding. As this happened the Pastor decided enough was enough and he called on the Church to PRAY that God would shut the bar down. A week later, a terrible storm roared through the town and Lightning struck the Bar and it burnt down to the ground. The Church folk bragged about “The Power of Prayer.” Soon the owner of the bar heard about this he halted his insurance claims and instead sued the Church on the grounds that the church was ultimately responsible for the demise of his building, either through direct or indirect actions or means. The church vehemently denied all responsibility or any connection to the building's demise in its reply to the court. In court, the judge looked over the paperwork and said: ‘I don't know how I'm going to decide this, but as it appears from the paperwork, we have a bar owner who believes in the power of prayer, and an entire church congregation that does not.’

Today I want to urge you to FORGET THE SUPER BOWL. I want you to FOCUS ON THE WORD OF GOD THIS MORNING. BECAUSE WHAT YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR, CAN AND WILL (IF YOU ALLOW IT) CHANGE YOUR LIVES FOREVER.

It may come as a surprise to you that millions of Christians while they say (84%) that they've prayed in the last week. Yet for many this is nothing but a ritual – a ritual many think will result in nothing changing. See many say they believe but with their heart they really think nothing is going to happen. Others simply don't pray much. Other times when we do, our thoughts wander to this or that. When prayer becomes ritual – it WILL be dull and boring. On the other hand there are those of us who pray long, loud and hard. Others use repetitions or “flowery language.”

What kind of language? Let's use a child talking to his Daddy (isn't that what prayer is? Us Children of God talking to our Abba – Daddy?). Instead of saying: Daddy, I'm Skeered of the Dark! Will You Help Me? Imagine the child saying thus: “Grand Omnipotent Father of the Household, I beseech thy presence! Great Provider of all that I have, grant me thy presence through the long watches of the night, for lingering fears have beset thy servant on every hand! Yea, they encumber thy servant even now – and verily shall until the dawn's first rays shall at long last light my heart with hope.”

Strange picture? Yet that's exactly how many try to pray. King James English works for the Bible but not so much for our talks with God. Jesus addresses this and brings us to our first “secret weapon” that the Devil uses.

1. **Secret Weapon One: Wrong Ways To Pray**

a) **Praying To Be Seen (v.5) and Praying Wordy, Repetitious (v.7) Prayers**

- i. Matthew 6:5-7 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. 7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.
 1. We ought to pray whenever the situation calls for it – but not for show.
 2. Remember when you pray (esp. out loud) that you're talking to God – not everybody else (even though others hear you) and not for their benefit either!

b) **Praying With Wrong/Ulterior Motives**

- i. James 4:2-3 Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.
 1. So there's a reason that God didn't let us get this/win that/go there, etc.
 2. Don't get “mad” at God a “prayer” goes unanswered, because God knows OUR motives: Proverbs 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

c) **Praying With Sin In Our Life**

i. **Is One Reason We're Not HEARD:**

1. **Psalms 66:18** If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:
 1. This literally states: If I see or know of sin in my heart, the Lord won't hear my Prayer.
 2. **1 Peter 3:7** Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.
 3. **Proverbs 21:13** Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.
 1. The implication here is that when we IGNORE the poor (and we are able to help them) then God will not hear our cry (Prayer).

ii. **Is One Reason We Receive No Answer**

1. **James 1:6-7** But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.
2. **Mark 11:24-25** Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.
3. **Matthew 21:22** And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye

shall receive.

1. Before you jump on the Blab and Grab or Name It and Claim It Bandwagon we need to finish that context of Scripture, but I want to bring that up in my third point, so suffice it to say at this moment, that one key to prayer is having FAITH. This brings me to the Second of the Intertwined secret weapons the devil uses in connection with prayer.

The next two points deal with sin in our lives, but these are two areas that hit home in regards to the Believer's Prayer life and well his or her overall Christian life.

2. Secret Weapon Two: Praying Without Faith AND Fasting!

- a) We saw in our last point that if we ask (pray) and we have no Faith then God declares He will not give anything in regards to that prayer. Is this because God is mean? NO! God can only operate where FAITH IS.
- b) Verses on Fasting in many modern Bibles have been deleted. Why? Because one of Satan's Secret Weapons is to KILL THE POWER OF PRAYER THROUGH LACK OF FAITH BY BLINDING US TO BIBLICAL FASTING.
- c) Faith IS connected to Fasting in the Scripture. Please note:
 - i. Many Preachers go in Matthew 6. They urge the Congregation to:
 1. Tithe/Give - Matthew 6:2 Therefore **when thou doest** thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
 2. Pray - Matthew 6:5 And **when thou prayest**, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
 - ii. That's where most stop. They forget the THIRD "**when**" which is found in Matthew 6:16, Right after the So-Called Lord's Prayer (that's really the disciples' prayer "teach us how to pray" the REAL Lord's Prayer is in John 17) Matt. 6:16 states: Moreover **when ye fast**, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
 - iii. So Jesus EXPECTS US to FAST. He said so again in Matthew 9:14-15 Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? 15 And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.
 1. The Bridegroom is Himself. When he "shall be taken from them" well, He's gone now into Heaven – Jesus said: "THEN shall they fast." I really don't see this as a "if I want to do this."
- d) Remember we were reading in Mark 11:24 those stirring words that seemed to make God into a Genie? "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Well, we're gonna read the next verse in my LAST POINT, but we're still on the SECOND POINT so read the TWO verses BEFORE it: Mark 11:22-23 "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. 23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith."
 - i. There is a similar or Sister Verse to this found in Matthew 17:20-21 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a

grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. 21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

1. BACK UP THE TRUCK – THIS KIND (OF FAITH HE MEANS) ONLY GOES OUT (OR OPERATES) BY PRAYER AND FASTING.
 2. NEWSFLASH – Find that verse in the TEXT of a modern “bible” you will not find it in the NIV or many others. Yet in Mark 9:29 the NIV includes “only by prayer” but deletes “and fasting!” You can look up Acts 10:30, 1 Cor. 7:5 and 2 Cor. 11:27 in the NIV and compare with the KJV and see that again and again and again **fasting** is deleted! Why? Because the Devil wants to REMOVE THAT KIND OF FAITH FROM THE PRAYERS, LIVES AND THE CHURCHES OF THE SAINTS. DID YOU HAPPEN TO NOTICE IN THOSE VERSES THAT THIS FASTING WAS OCCURRING SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH PRAYER!
 3. So Fasting AND Prayer are directly connected with STRONG POWERFUL FAITH. All of which the DEVIL DOESN'T WANT US TO HAVE ACCESS TO!
 4. I find Righteousness connected with many who fasted: Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Nehemiah, Daniel, Anna, Early Christians, the Apostles – including Paul. Perhaps this is why we see in James 5:16b “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” Notice that God watches and hears the Righteous in Psalms 34:15 “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.”
 5. SO THIS INDICATES THAT THE WAY WE LIVE INFLUENCES OUR PRAYERS – JUST LIKE WE SAW THAT SPOUSES FIGHTING CAN HINDER PRAYER IN 1 PETER 3:7. Prayer and Fasting = Faith = Righteousness.
- 3. SECRET WEAPON THREE: PRAYING WITHOUT FORGIVENESS**
- a) Remember in Mark 11:24 where God turned into a Genie? “Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” Well, NOW as PROMISED we're gonna read the next verse: Mark 11:25-26 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.
 - b) STOP! WHOA!! DO WHAT??? Jesus SAID that we MUST F-O-R-G-I-V-E.
 - c) MANY MANY Times in our lives as Christians – we pray in Sin because we “have ought against another person.”
 - d) We cause Bitterness to choke our fellowship with God and the Church and WE allow this evil root to infest and invalidate our prayers into empty hollow words of ritual.
 - e) At this time I want to tell you a TRUE story – this must be my longest Illustration I've EVER given but I want you to pay close attention to it. For it is real, and it may be your story in this life.
 - f) A Pastor we'll call him Abel recalled the following TRUE Story: When he was 3 his parents had a baby girl and they told their little boy that this Sister – we'll call her Mary - was his Birthday Present. Abel took to Mary readily and saw himself as her protector. Once Mary brought her boyfriend over. Abel “just happened” to be on the front porch – cleaning his shotgun. Needless to say that boy didn't come back so often. Some years later, Abel, now a Pastor found out some heart-breaking news. Mary was sexually molested when she was little by a close, close family friend. We'll call him Max. Max was Abel's 6th grade teacher who taught him how to play raquetball, shopped at his Dad's retail store, cheered often for his sister on her school teams. This single thirty-something teacher friend of the family often ate with them and was very supportive of their family. What no one knew was that over the years he had molested young girls and one of them had been Abel's little sister. Abel said: To say I wanted Max to die and burn in Hell was the understatement of the century. Although the words hate, anger,

revenge came to his mind the English language did not simply contain the words to describe the way I *felt*. Abel stated that he knew he was supposed to forgive but that just meant most of the time for little things he said surely there were SOME THINGS GOD would NOT EXPECT US TO FORGIVE SOMEONE FOR DOING?

- i. It has been stated that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 4 boys in America have been sexually abused. So odds are you may be one of those or know one or more.
- g) Abel harbored that anger and hate and shame over himself that he did not know these things were happening at the time. Abel felt RIGHT to feel BITTER. He allowed these feelings to root deep, deep down inside. One day the WORD OF GOD CONFRONTED HIM:
 - i. Hebrews 12:15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;
- h) How can our hearts be called "GOOD GROUND" in Matthew 13:8 if we have allowed BITTERNESS (WHICH IS THE OPPOSITE OF LOVE) to TAKE ROOT?
- i) You know how to get shed of weeds? Don't cut the plant. Gut OUT the ROOTS. Bitterness – hanging onto the evils of others doesn't only affect the person who was victimized but it can cause "many to be defiled" This is what was happening to Abel. He took his sister's pain, hurt and scars as his own. SO when MAX got Muscular Dystrophy and horrible, crippling disease, Abel the Pastor REJOICED and figured He's getting what he deserves!
- j) Only God's POWER not our OWN strength can get RID of BITTERNESS or HATE or ANGER in our hearts and lives. So HOW?
 - i. Ephesians 4:31-32 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.
 - ii. So it is God's Command for us to release that wound, that person, those people but many times we sit even as Abel did, in defiance to the WORD of God as he screamed: NO! LORD NO! I REFUSE TO FORGIVE MAX! I WILL NOT FORGIVE HIM!!!
- k) One day, Abel heard another Pastor preach from Luke 6:28 "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you." So the Preacher said SURE LORD I'll Pray for MAX – I'll PRAY FOR HIM TO GET A CASE OF ETERNAL HEMORRHOIDS. Again, later that week in Bible Study Abel was confronted with Matthew 5:43-44 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
- l) Abel finally realized that it was no use. God was boxing him in. Closing in on him. Commanding him to PRAY for his ENEMIES. So he finally RELENATED – He did not yet FORGIVE but he prayed – Teeth gritting – Lord, Work in.....in.....Max's life. Each week passed and he grudgingly gritted out those words. Weeks turned into months and finally Abel was sincerely MEANING what he was praying. He REALLY wanted God to work in MAX'S life.
- m) Eventually Abel knew he had to make a DECISION. According to Colossians 3:13 "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." and as Luke 11:4 teaches: "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."
- n) Abel prayed that God would help him forgive Max. He said his heart was stone hard. It was cold as the South Pole. He prayed God would soften his heart. HE wanted to go on hating this man who had wronged his loved one. GOD wanted him to FORGIVE the man.

- o) One day Abel decided he WOULD forgive the man. A weight of years of burden were lifted off his shoulders as he forgave – he released his hate, anger and vengeance against Max for what he had done to Mary.
- p) A few months later, Abel, while visiting his parents decided to write Max a letter telling him he had forgiven him. At the time he did not know that Max was in hospice and was losing his battle against Muscular Dystrophy awaiting death.
- q) Months later, a hospice nurse wrote to Pastor Abel and told him the following story: Max's eyesight had deteriorated and that he had asked me to read your letter. Although I wasn't aware of what Max had done, it was obvious that he had done something grievously wrong. Max listened and as he did I saw tears streaming down his face. I came to the story who told him of Jesus and when we came to the sinner's prayer, he asked that I pray the prayer with him. After he prayed his whole countenance changed once God made him a new creature in Christ. Just a few days later Max died. If it had not been for your letter of forgiveness and showing him the gospel of Christ, who is to say that Max would be in Hell today? Thank you for showing the Love of Christ.
- r) **FOLKS! THAT'S WHY GOD WANTS US TO FORGIVE.** It is in those moments when **WE ARE HURT MOST THAT WE CAN LET CHRIST SHINE THROUGH US:**
 - i. Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.
- s) One of the reasons our prayer life **STINKS** is because of the **SINS AND BITTERNESS WE HARBOR IN OUR HEARTS!**

4. CLOSING WORDS ON PRAYER

- a) 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing.
 - i. Pray with the frequency of a hacking cough. Again it doesn't mean pray for a long wordy time. It means talk to God more. Tell him what's eating at you. Be open, honest and frank with Him! Pour your heart out to Him – yes even over the little things.
- b) Ephesians 5:20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;
 - i. Give thanks in your prayers and Always Pray in JESUS NAME.
- c) 1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - i. Confess your sins to God – BEFORE you Pray. Repent of them.
- d) Ephesians 6:18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
 - i. Pray for others.
- e) Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.
 - i. Pray for yourself.

In this powerful message, I have attempted to shine some light on a serious problem that's going on in many Christians' lives and in the lives of many Churches tonight – we are being attacked unwittingly by some powerful weapons of our enemy the devil. I pray as Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 2:11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

I pray that you will **NOT BE IGNORANT OF SATAN'S SECRET WEAPONS IN THE CHURCH AND THAT YOU IN GOD'S MIGHT AND POWER WILL TURN THE TABLES ON OUR ENEMY OL' SLEWFOOT AND USE THE POWER OF PRAYER ONCE AGAIN THAT WE MAY BE OF ONE MIND AND OF ONE ACCORD.**